

Circling (was Of Guns and Packages)

by Shan Jeniah

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Summary: Some missing scenes from Seasons Three and Four. What happens in the days between that initial foray into neuropressure, and the events of "Home?" My headcanon in progress makes its own explorations. Some chapters contain sexual content; there may be T-rated adaptations of them in the future.

## 1. Prologue The Needs of the Many

**\*\*Author's Notes:\*\***

**\*\*I don't own them; they might own me.\*\***

**\*\*First off, I want to thank everyone who has come to read, review, follow, or favorite. Being new here, it's incredibly inspiring to know that my stories are providing entertainment, making people think, giving those sizzling TnT feels. April is my busiest writing month, and this weekend my kids and I are visiting out-of-state friends, so I may not answer comments right away. Please know that I am reading them, and I'll be back to answer when the dust clears and my mind is coherent enough for that task. As always, I love feedback, and find it very useful, so let me have it!\*\***

**\*\*And, speaking of sizzle, this story has sex. Not just in allusions. It's not graphic or the entirety of the scene, but the M rating applies, and the piece is probably NSFW. None in this chapter, which is rated T for minor allusions to prescription medication abuse.\*\***

**\*\*This scene takes place between during "The Xindi", as an exploration of the neuropressure thread. Spoilers for "The Xindi", "Bounty", and "The Expanse", and references to my previous story, "Cowled".\*\***

**\_\*\*The Needs of the Many\*\*\_**

Phlox considers the problem as he moves to the tank of eels. This crew has faced a terrible trauma, and it has fallen to them to ensure their homeworld's safety. They've spent most of the last months in transit back to Earth, then to the Expanse, and now through it, seeking what seem to be extremely sparse clues.

He spends a few moments watching their graceful movements. \_Enterprise's\_ crew is understandably stressed, and it's beginning to take a physiological toll on them. There is little to be done, in most cases, beyond palliative care. Only answers will settle things; only information can provide those answers.

Subcommander T'Pol is graceful - and a very long way from home. She is less given to personal talk than anyone on the ship. Although she seems to have adjusted to her sudden departure from the High Command, there was likely to be a certain isolation in her new reality. It can't be easy for a Vulcan cut off from her own people and the ways her human shipmates offer and receive comfort.

"I sense she is too much alone, and knows of no way to deal with the lack." He nods to the tank, and takes up a pinch of snow beetle droppings, which contain optimal nutrition for the eels.

Commander Tucker's personal trauma is far deeper than the fresh wound that scores his planet's surface- it goes to his soul. Earth will heal; those who had been in the path of the attack, as the Commander's sister had been, could not. Death is permanent - and its impact upon the formerly easygoing engineer has been profound. His connection to his sibling was deep and sustaining. Where once his easy manner set the tone for the crew, now he is far more volatile - and he isn't sleeping. He's in desperate need of solace and rest. He's seeking respite in hyposprays full of sedatives; but there is no sedative that can overwhelm his grief, and he runs a grave risk of becoming dependent upon them.

Two of the eels are ignoring the food; they are engaged in a mating dance, and won't eat until after their coupling period ends. Phlox reserves a bit of the food - the others will consume all that is available, but these two will no doubt be hungry, when their amorous activities end.

The doctor watches the mating pair, and a plan begins to form. Perhaps he can assist Commander Tucker and Subcommander T'Pol to find mutual healing, through healing one another. He smiles and leaves the eels to their own devices, as the humans would say. Yes, that will do nicely, if he approaches it properly.

Sometimes, privacy and basic nature can do more than any amount of advisement or medical intervention.

T'Pol studies her face in the small mirror, attempting to surmise what \_h\_e\_ will see when he looks at her tonight. She appears nearly as tired as she feels; it has been a challenging day, beginning with Phlox's revelation regarding the Commander's insomnia, and his request, so casually expressed. But of course the Denobulan physician doesn't know the import of what he asked, nor how conflicted she is by her own agreement.

Perhaps she should call Doctor Phlox, and explain that this deeply intimate practice is never engaged in between unbonded members of

opposite genders. Perhaps it's best to explain the inherent risks, and the intended purpose of neuropressure in the establishment and deepening of the pairbond, and as a prelude to sexual relations.

If he knew the significance of the practice, of its vital place in Vulcan culture, would he have asked her to do this thing? Would he advise her to abort the effort, and find some other means to help the engineer manage his grief?

And if he couldn't?

Commander Tucker's day was, by all accounts, far more challenging than her own, and compounded by the effects of grief and exhaustion. Perhaps, he won't even notice her appearance. Nor should that matter to her, beyond the manner in which she might use it as a tool for his benefit, and \_Enterprise's, \_and Earth's.

The needs of the manyâ€¦

T'Pol traces the upswept pinnae of her ears, and her fingertips begin to tremble. \_He\_ is fascinated with her ears. He touched them, the first time they were in Decon together, and she had had to suppress the tremor of response. She wants him to touch her ears again. This is illogical; her ears will play no part in the neuropressure. She touched his neatly rounded ears that day, as well. Her fingertips yearn to do so again, to explore that which, even after years spent living among humans, is Other to her instincts regarding ears.

No. The respective shapes of their ears are irrelevant to her purposes.

The needs of the many outweigh the wants of the one.

And if she somehow damages him?

T'Pol picks up her lotion, and slathers it over her hands. She tells herself she's desensitizing her fingertips; that it's a necessary precaution. But she allows herself to take pleasure in the slip and tug of the lubricant, in her own touch. A small primal sound parts her lips, and her blood suffuses her face, bringing a new warmth, and a dusky tone. Would he find that appealing, or far too alien, a reminder that even their blood differs?

That is irrelevant. They need not have similar blood chemistry to share neuropressure. They need only mutual willingness, and access to the necessary skills.

She is accomplished at the practice. She had spent what time she wasn't otherwise engaged in study of human anatomy. There didn't seem to be any prohibitive differences, although many of the neural nodes were located slightly differently than their Vulcan counterparts, and she would require her full concentration, and an incremental learning process, to be certain of placement and response, which might be very different in such an emotionally undisciplined species.â€¦

T'Pol finds herself standing by her comm, still caressing her own hands. Did she move here consciously? Does it matter? The fact that she is touching herself in a manner intended to stimulate arousal, is proof that she must recuse herself.

She can't treat Commander Tucker if she isn't in control of her own desires. She reaches for the speaker button, intending to call Phlox.

But she stops, staring at her own paired and trembling fingers. An instinctive response, as the touching was. Instinctive, and revealing.

Logically, she ought not touch him, simply because of how deeply she want\_s to touch him. How deeply she feels the desire to ease his pain, not for Enterprise, or Earth, or even for him.

She wants to help him because she can't bear the thought of his suffering, the angry, wounded edge in his bearing, the distance and rage in his eyes, and the absence of his once familiar smiles and laughter.

The needs of the many are the want of the one.

She can't press the button. He is her flame; her nectar. He had been, in a restaurant in San Francisco. He is tonight. Nothing has changed, and for her, nothing will. Even if he feels nothing, if the attempt is a complete failure - she is Awakened to him. No other male can hold any appeal for her, so long as Charles Tucker the Third lives.

She will have to face her own responses to him, and the emotions that drive them. She will be vulnerable, because she desires him. Since the premature and pre-empted commencement of her mating cycle, the desire has been a spiraling live thing within her, growing like the tentacled entity that had once threatened to take over the ship.

And if he doesn't desire her?

T'Pol has no answer for that. She ponders it while she showers, and dresses in her sleepwear "made from the Triaxian silk he had given her, in a color that matches his eyes. She ponders it while she stares into her mirror, and finally she goes to her bench, and removes the book she had bought on Earth, still wrapped in the brown paper. She dares not open it tonight, but she traces the image on the cover with her trembling fingers that long to touch bared human skin.

T'Pol's hands, strong yet gentle, play over Trip's back, and, everywhere she touches, warm relaxation spreads outward from the neural nodes he didn't even know he had, before tonight.

Why the hell did he fight this so hard? He's alone with T'Pol, shirtless, and she's touching him. It's peaceful here in her quarters, with its dimness and candlelight, and the deep peace that reigns here. A woman's touch; if understated. He can tell what colors she likes best, what textures she enjoys touching.

She hasn't said much, except to explain what she's doing, and to instruct him in the proper breathing, which she'd already told him at least five times was 'vitally important'. But she seems - comfortable. It feels like maybe she enjoys touching him. Or maybe that's just wishful thinking, because he loves the feel of her hot fingers and her powerful, gentle hands moving on him, the sound of her breath moving through her, as he matches his own to it.

He's a little ashamed that it's taken him this long to realize that she's lonely, and that maybe he can help her by letting her help him. But she must need to talk, sometimes. Could just this be enough for her?

Time to up the ante. And put himself out there.

"I've been having these nightmares." It seems far too loud in this room, and he wishes he could take the words back. For a moment, there's only breathing, but her hands go still on his shoulders.

"I'm sorry." Once, he wouldn't have been able to hear the sincerity in her simple words. She'd told him he had a lot to learn about listening to Vulcans, and she'd been right.

"Do you, still?" He says nothing more; she doesn't like being vulnerable. Does anyone?

"I employ various techniques to guide my dreaming," she murmurs. Trip realizes that she hasn't really answered, but he doesn't call her on it. Her room; her hands on his shoulders. T'Pol leans forward. He feels her breast brush his shoulder, tantalizing. "Your breathing, Commander."

"Sorry." Did it mean something, that she'd taken off her shirt? That she let her breast touch him? That she was wearing pajamas made out of baby-blue Triaxian silk?

He isn't about to open that can of worms tonight. Might have jumped on the chance, a few months back - but now, he's not sure what he has to offer her. She's essentially given up everything to come with them. Because he'd gotten her drunk? Was it an impulsive choice that she now has to live with? And what the hell will he do if she gets hurt or killed out here?

"Breathing is the most important component of neuropressure," she reminds him yet again. Trip turns a little, to see her watching him with that worried look on her face. He wonders just when he'd learned to read her expressions and her voice - when she first came aboard, she'd seemed almost robotically nonexpressive. But then, he'd already seen the way the music danced across her face in tiny, potent shifts.

Damn - remembering that sent his breathing in the wrong direction.

"Would it help you to talk about the details of your dreams, Trip? I don't wish to pry, but they seem to be - distressing. I've learned humans often benefit from the sharing of such things."

She stayed behind him, and he was grateful for that small grace. He was on the ragged edge of either tears or rage too much lately; sometimes both, at once. Usually, with no idea which was coming. "Yeah, maybe it would - but this is just between us, right? You're not going to report it back to Phlox?"

"Your dreams are a personal matter. I will not share them without your permission." The candles flicker, and she breathes smoothly, her

hands sliding over his shoulders and down his arms. Does she know what she's doing, or is this something else?

Whichever, it's damned soothing. He doesn't so much decide to tell her, as the words just come pouring out of him like they've been waiting for an excuse.

"I'm standing by the house. It's a beautiful day, and Lizzie's out at the edge of the park " there was a table there, by the fountain. She had her tea parties there when she was really little, and liked to read in that same spot when she got bigger. Sometimes we're kids, and sometimes adults- " A choking sob breaks from him. "Sorry \_"

"There's no need. "Her hands are hot and comforting as they softly caress his upper arms. She leans her cheek into his shoulder; her breath prickling the skin on the back of his neck with new awareness. They're alone, in candlelight, on her bed, and she's only in some thin clingy silk. "There's no need." She repeats it, her voice huskier than usual, but barely more than a whisper.

"I'm screaming to her to get out, to move. But I can't get close to her, and she doesn't hear me. The probe is coming, but she's looking at me and trying to figure out what I'm saying. Then the wind hits her, whips her hair into her face. She had such pretty long blonde hair - she was so proud of it..." Trip bows his head over the pain, and her hands move in slow circles - not neuropressure, just a comforting touch on his skin. Comfort for him? Herself? Both of them? "She turns, and the fires hit her, and, just like that, she's gone...and that's when I wake up."

That did it. He's crying like a baby.

Her arms wrap around his neck, and he feels wetness on his shoulder. Is T'Pol crying with him? "I grieve with you, Trip. Perhaps, if I were human, I would know what to say -"

That pulls a tiny smile from him. "Don't count on it. I never do." He wants to turn to her, wrap his arms around her, feel her in his arms as proof he's more alive than he's felt lately, more than the ragged broken edges of rage and tears that marked the slicing scorched place where home and Lizzie had been. But he's afraid to break the spell, or mention what she might see as a lapse of control.

So he cries, great heaving noises that echo in her still sacred Vulcan space, that intrude on her sanctuary. He's shaken by their force; he hurts, but his focus is on her silent tears on his skin. Proof, as if he needs it, that she feels, and feels deeply.

For him.

Phlox smiles. It's late into ship's night, and he'd had no visit from Commander Tucker. T'Pol, when asked, had said only that neuropressure was an intimate experience, that Commander Tucker had accepted it, and that she would say no more concerning it, as it was a matter of privacy. But she looked - more centered, and less alone, than she had a day ago.

The eels were back to their mating dance. Perhaps, in the end, it was the most basic of contacts that held the most potency.

## 2. Chapter 1 Of Guns and Packages

**\*\*Author's Notes:\*\***

**\*\*First off, I want to thank everyone who has come to read, review, follow, or favorite. Being new here, it's incredibly inspiring to know that my stories are providing entertainment, making people think, giving those sizzling TnT feels. April is my busiest writing month, and this weekend my kids and I are visiting out-of-state friends, so I may not answer comments right away. Please know that I am reading them, and I'll be back to answer when the dust clears and my mind is coherent enough for that task. As always, I love feedback, and find it very useful, so let me have it!\*\***

**\*\*And, speaking of sizzle, today's story has sex. Not just in allusions. It's not graphic or the entirety of the scene, but the M rating applies, and the piece is probably NSFW.\*\***

**\*\*This scene takes place between "Harbinger" and "Doctor's Orders". Spoilers for "Harbinger".\*\***

**\*\*Of Guns and Packages\*\***

"Damn, woman, you've got amazing guns." Trip flopped down on the floor, knowing he should close out the form, but too damned exhausted to care. He may have been doing this years longer than T'Pol, but he was no match for her Vulcan strength and endurance. Not here, and not in bed, either. If he'd been the macho type, she would have put him in his place right from the start, with the way she'd damned near launched herself at his lips, then dropped her robe to reveal herself to him.

She'd been completely and gloriously bare beneath. Just thinking about that, and what it meant that she'd been doing neuropressure on him just like any other night while she was all but naked, did things to him, even though he was beat. That would be mighty inconvenient, if there was anyone in the gym besides the two of them. But they were alone, so he just decided to enjoy the moment, secure in the knowledge that, unless there was some emergency, she was going to be in his bed tonight, or he was going to be in hers. It was getting to be a habit.

T'Pol held her Single Whip with purposeful grace, then flowed into Cloud Hands like cooling lava, or a gentle tide, stretching each movement out, testing herself. She didn't look like someone who'd learned the form only three hours ago. Of course, she'd been doing it ever since, and she looked like she could go another three hours, easy.

He had to admit that teaching her tai chi was a hell of an inspiration. This way, they could be together off duty and out of the Mess Hall without it seeming remarkable to anyone else. Well, maybe that was wishful thinking, since Malcolm sure thought the two of them were worth gossiping about even before there was anything to gossip about.

But Trip didn't care. Let Malcolm speculate; he had T'Pol, and she seemed to like being with him the same way he liked being with her.

Not that she'd come out and say so, but when he suggested this, she'd been almost eager to try. He wondered if it was the idea of a new martial art, or if she would have jumped at any old thing, if they could do it together. Maybe he needed to experiment a little, find things that she never would've agreed to, before they'd taken this private intercultural exchange to the next level.

T'Pol move through the sequence of intricate synchronized hand and foot motions effortlessly. Damn, she was beautiful in action, the silvery-grey suit accentuated those curves that begged him to touch, and fit against him like she was made to be there. Sometimes, he still couldn't believe that this wasn't all some elaborate fantasy he'd cooked up to keep himself from going mad during neuropressure sessions.

She was a Vulcan, and she wanted him. These last few nights, she'd fallen asleep in his arms, and kept him in bed every possible second the next morning. She hadn't said anything about it, but he was pretty sure she wasn't meditating, and it was starting to show in little ways that worried him a little. He was her first, and, even though she didn't seem to think that was even worth mentioning beforehand, Trip thought it was a pretty big deal, and he didn't want what was going on between them to upset her emotional equilibrium. He knew now how damned hot and fast her passions ran, and how they could swallow her up. It's not like she was a little girl or needing him to make her decisions for her, but sometimes he got the idea that she was in over her head, and that maybe him being human and not Vulcan had a hell of a lot to do with it. Maybe, much as he loved being with her, she'd have been better off marrying that guy Koss, who shared genetics and instincts with her.

But she wasn't married to Koss. She was with him, here in Enterprise's small gym, dancing very precisely, and very gracefully through the form, in very slow motion. She looked serene; maybe Vulcan chi wasn't so different from the human kind, because he knew that feeling.

So he sat on the padded gym deck, propped against the mirrored wall, and sucked down some water while he admired the spectacular view of a Vulcan at peace and in motion. Maybe it was okay about the not meditating, if she kept on doing this?

Cloud Hands floated back into Single Whip, and her gaze found him in the mirror.

"Do you intend simply to watch, Commander?"

"You wore me out."

He let her get away with using his rank, since they weren't in his quarters or in the clinches. He'd put his foot down on those two; no way he wanted to be a Commander in bed, and she didn't even officially have a rank anymore.

"You said this discipline is intended to energize the body, mind, and spirit." The way her nostrils flared said that she was counting on that. Trip was starting to get the feeling that she was insatiable â€" and that he was in very delicious trouble. Hadn't she sat in the Captain's Mess and told him and Jon that Vulcans only mated once every seven years? Hadn't Kov said the same thing - or was that just



Vulcan \_males\_?

"It has limits. I \_am\_ only human, after all." He grinned; she was almost \_pout\_ing\_, without shifting her expression in the slightest. She really was easy to read, once he'd cracked her code. "Besides, those amazing guns of yours come in a damned appealing package. Just watching you is a treat."

If it was supposed to only be once every seven years, though, Trip figured she ought to be damned near set for the next couple of centuries, by now. They'd passed that seven year threshold in less than a day, and it just kept on going from there. It had been only five days, but there hadn't been a single day since that first night when they hadn't ended up all tangled together at one of their places, and usually more than once.

"I have heard female crew members discussing the fact that human males are often aroused through their visual sense. It's agreeable that you watch, Trip, if this is so."

Music to his ears, her calling him by his nickname. If things went his way, he was going to get a few dozen more "Trips" out of her before the night was through. He especially loved when she sighed it out on ragged breaths, just before she lost the capacity to talk at all.

She executed a perfect, lovely Snake Creeps Down, her leg fully extended, calf nearly brushing the deck as she twisted with perfect control to end facing him. "I don't understand your vernacular," she said, shifting into Golden Rooster Stands on Left Leg as though it wasn't any harder than breathing. She hadn't so much as broken a sweat. He was sure no one on Earth had ever made tai chi look this good, or this effortless. Or maybe used it as foreplay, which sure as hell seemed to be what she intended, here.

"My vernacular? You've lost me." He'd been too busy being visually stimulated to pay much attention to what he was saying.

"You used the words 'guns' and 'package' as though you intended them to mean something other than their typical applications." She watched him, her eyes dilated, as she lowered her right leg and lifted the left.

Trip groaned as he sorted through that mouthful; he was going to end up with a brain as tired as his body before she was done with him. "Sometimes, it's a workout just having a conversation with you."

"I often find our interactions similarly challenging. However, you haven't clarified the particular idiomatic expressions you employed."

"When did I have a chance?"

She surprised him by dropping the form and coming to stand directly in front of him, her hands tucked behind her. Her just bet they were starting to tremble. "You have a chance, now."

Damned right he did. He started to get up, and she extended a helping hand. Yup. It was quivering. He took it and let her pull him up, knowing all the while she was waiting for an answer.

But she wasn't. This was an ambush, and now she had him. All pretense fell away as her body pressed, trembling and insistent, against his as she claimed his lips. She wasn't the least bit shy, once she decided to act, but Trip had a soft spot for sexually assertive women, no matter their species. He wrapped his arms around her waist, and kissed her back.

T'Pol started to arch back as slowly as she had been doing the form, pulling him along with her. When she did that, it only ever led to one place.

Not that Trip minded going there with her â€" or at least trying to, if his poor human body was able to follow through on the promises it was making. But they sure as hell couldn't do it here, where anybody could walk in and catch them in the act. Someone needed to think fast here, about something other than sex. Wasn't going to be her, so that just left him... "I don't know about you, T'Pol, but I need a shower."

"A shower?" T'Pol tasted the words, and her breath got short and sharp. Her eyes glowed. She was a scientist, but he was a pretty damned fair engineer, and it hadn't taken long to figure out that the combination of a puzzle and wet skin had a very specific and highly desirable effect on her.

"Yup." He waited a beat or two, and added, "Wanna join me?"

"Yes." But she didn't mean the shower, and that was obvious in about two seconds, when she moaned and grabbed at his pants, shaking so hard he knew he wasn't going to get her out of here without some damned obvious assistance. And it wasn't nearly late enough to count on empty corridors, or no one walking in. But he had to try.

"Hey, what's this? I'm not going to shower in the middle of the gym, and neither are you."

T'Pol just stared at him. She hadn't sweated in three straight hours of tai chi, but now the sweat was dripping off her, and her panting was sharp. Her perfume was filling up the room, and starting to make him dizzy.

And then her body arched again, her muscles tensing, her body quaking, her irises swallowed up in her pupils. She snapped back to him like a taut living boomerang, hands tangling in his hair, then greedily pulled him to her. No way in hell he was gonna talk her down off the edge now.

"Gotta lock the door." That's what he tried to say, anyway around her tongue, lips, and teeth. But if she understood, she didn't care, and the suddenness of her arousal had his own traitorous body on her side. He could feel how much she wanted this â€" maybe needed it. He didn't need to know why, now. He wasn't going to get her out of here, so maybe he'd better just -

Almost as though she knew what he was thinking, T'Pol's arching pulled him down on top of her. When had she managed to get both their pants down? Why wasn't he fighting this?

Then she rose to meet him, to grab onto his hips with Vulcan

strength, and that was all there was to it. Nature took its course with animal force; it was all over in less than a minute, and they were all tangled up again, her heart jackhammering at warp speed near his belly, his breath, tasting of her incendiary kisses, moaning out to match hers. She shuddered hard in the aftermath; he knew better than to think she was even close to done. It was always this way â€" first came sex. Mating, she called it. The act, without trimmings, almost like they were animals answering a primal drive, and that was all there was to it.

But she was learning how to make love, too, and learning fast, and, even though she couldn't talk now, Trip knew that was what was next on the agenda.

"We gotta get you out of here before - " T'Pol didn't say anything. She probably couldn't. But she nodded, and let him help her get their tangled clothes, which had just been shoved out of the way, back in order. Her color was high, and he felt the thrumming of sexual energy moving through her and into him like a current. "C'mon. I'm taking you home." He wrapped an arm around her, afraid to let go of her for fear that she'd maybe tackle him in the corridor if he did. "Anyone asks, we were sparring. I tripped over my own feet and fell on your ankle, okay?"

She nodded, her eyes huge. Trip wasn't sure this was going to work, but then she lifted her left foot and held it gingerly a few centimeters above the deck plating. She leaned in against him, breathing deeply as the shaking eased up a little. Trip guided her to the door, and pressed the button, hoping like hell their luck held out.

The door opened, and there stood Malcolm Reed â€" the biggest damned gossip on the ship. He gaped at them, but then, damn it, he started to grin. "Well, now, what have we here? Just friends, are we?"

"Well, sometimes we're also sparring partners, if you wanna to know the truth, Malcolm. Although I'm way outta my league." He heard his accent broaden and deepen, the way it often did when he was trying to get away with something.

"I always thought so." Malcolm's clipped British accent said volumes, but Trip wasn't going anywhere near that comment.

T'Pol found her words again, and she didn't have any compunctions. "I do not. Anyone might fall, Commander. The injury is minor; elevation and ice will undoubtedly alleviate any swelling, and the pain is only mildly inconveniencing. However, I am uncomfortable, standing here, and I do require your assistance to reach my quarters." She inclined her head to Malcolm. "If you will excuse us, Lieutenant Reed." >"Of course." Malcolm's face got red, and he got out of the way in a hurry. T'Pol remained the model of Vulcan calm the whole time she was mock-hobbling to her quarters, but that thrum of current hadn't gone anywhere, and, the second her door closed behind them, she got busy stripping them both out of their clothes.<p>

"It's time to shower," she said, and led the way.

**\*\*Author's Notes/Disclaimer in Chapter One.\*\***

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**\*\*This scene takes place during "Harchery," Spoilers for that and "Harbinger." \*\***

**\_\*\*Imminent Danger\*\*\_**

"We both know he's endangering the ship, and our mission." T'Pol didn't look away, and her eyes were glittering and dilated.

"Damn it, I can't argue with -" His last word was smothered by hot, lush lips and a tongue that forced itself into his mouth. Anything else he might have said got tangled up in her low moan. Her body crashed hungrily into his. If he'd doubted what she intended for even a second, her arching was proof enough. She was like a bowstring pulled taut and trembling, and her scent was a sudden thick cloud, sharp and salty with minerals that choked out the smoky citrus and floral notes.

Trip's body responded just about instantly; he was in imminent danger of losing his head. T'Pol was already gone; she always was, when she smelled like this.

They were both panting by the time she broke away a bit. She was slick with sweat, and shaking so hard he was afraid to let go of her. Probably no way to shut down this warp core breach in the making, but Trip tried anyway. "Hey, what's this? Thought you wanted me to stall the Cap'n till Phlox -"

She got hold of his zipper and pulled it down in one swift motion, her breathing ragged. "Too many clothes," she got out, in a sultry half growl, but there weren't going to be many more words, at this rate. She burrowed her face in against his shirt and breathed him in deeply, though how she could smell anything past her own scent, he had no idea.

He tried again, lifting his fingers to stroke her sweaty cheek. "T'Pol, we gotta - "

"Mate." She tugged his fingers into her hot mouth and sucked hard. Trip groaned. She'd learned fast what turned him on, and she was relentless and motivated. She stared up at him, irises gone into those dilated Vulcan pupils, and then she arched again, even though there wasn't room, and she crashed against the window.

That didn't even slow her down. She yanked him in against her, and started to move. "Mate. Mate. Mate."

"Shh," Trip soothed. Damn, she was strong; it wasn't a good idea to try to resist when she got that look in her glazed eyes. Imminent danger "and he was glad he'd told Chang he needed neuropressure" they had an hour, maybe more.

He could only hope an hour was going to be enough|

That was about the last coherent thought he had. She was ground herself against him while she got rid of the clothes that were in the way, while he managed to get her zipper down, helping her shrug out of the catsuit.

Trip tried to steer her to the bed, but she couldn't wait that long. She kicked her boot off one foot, not even bothering with the other, and wrapped that leg around him, her powerful hands tugging him into her, and her breath a sharp wanting cry as he entered.

Her eyes were brighter than the stars, her pull on him stronger than the planet below them. He was hers. She was his.

What happened next was inevitable and cataclysmic. It was shattering, and T'Pol locked her teeth into his shoulder, like she'd done the first time. Her gasping turned into a sob, than another, and another. Not silent Vulcan tears; actual, gut-wrenching crying.

Trip ignored the pain. Something was wrong; he could feel it and hear it. "T'Pol? You OK?"

She was shaking like a leaf. She didn't answer. Right; she couldn't talk now. Needed a few minutes for her words to come back. His knees wanted to sag, but she was clinging to him, so Trip carried her to her bed, and got them onto it more clumsily than he wanted, wriggling them under the blankets, while she cried wordlessly against him.

Damn, she wasn't going to let go of his shoulder, and her spasms were jerking her teeth. It was really hurting now. Trip stroked her jaw, soft and slow. "Can you let go now, pepperpot? I might need that shoulder for something."

Her body tensed, and Trip sucked in a sharp breath. That seemed to get to her where his words hadn't. Slowly, her jaw relaxed, and she let go.

But she was still crying as she put her ear against his chest. Trip kissed her hair, let her hold on tight, her hot tears getting him all wet. Why did he suddenly want to cry, too?

#### 4. Chapter 3 The Male of the Species

**\*\*Author's Notes/disclaimer in Chapter One.\*\***

**\*\*Today's story is a bit tamer than the last two in this series. It's more like T.\*\***

**\*\*This is a missing scene that takes place immediately preceding**

"Home". No real spoilers.\*\*

\_\_\*\*The Male of the Species\*\*\_\_

"You don't have to pretend, pepperpot." Trip had been mulling this over for the last three days, ever since she told him she was going home while she had the leave time. But now that it was out there on the deck plating, in the small space between them, Trip almost wished he could take it back. Of course, it didn't work that way with T'Pol.

"That's fortunate, since I'm far from adept at the practice." She stopped massaging the soles of his feet, and looked at him down the length of her luscious and completely bare body. "However, I'm confused as to what you've absolved me from having to pretend \_about\_."

Tonight was the last night they had together before she went home, and, even though she said she was considering staying with \_Enterprise\_, maybe joining Starfleet, Trip wanted to get it said, so there'd be nothing for her to feel guilty about, later. She'd been through enough "and a hell of a lot \_more\_ than enough" this last year. She didn't need any more feelings she didn't understand taking her over.

"Trip?" She released his foot, spinning with almost impossible grace so that they were lying face to face. "You're troubled. Perhaps I can ease your mind."

"Not unless you can make the males of your species less - well, \_Vulcan\_."

"I can't. Why would that be of any consequence?" She tipped her head just a bit in that way that let him know he'd surprised her.

"Well, let's go with the short list. They're faster, stronger, and smell better than I do. They live longer, they speak your language without Tripping up all the words, they're a hell of a lot more \_logical\_ than I am, and I'll just about bet they'd never ever stoop to asking your age, reading your mail, or holding a phase pistol to your head while they accused you of about colluding with rock people. And I'll bet not a single male Vulcan in your entire history has ever gotten himself \_knocked up\_."

"All of these things are true, or likely so." A pause. "Why are you scowling, Trip?"

"Let me guess. Those Vulcan guys " none of them have egos that need stroking."

"You wished me to refute your statements."

"You could've argued a \_little\_." Damn. He sounded like a petulant kid.

"I would have been lying."

Trip sighed. "I might've really liked it if you had. Just a little " because I'm human, and \_my\_ ego \_does\_ need stroking." Why did he keep expecting her to follow human scripts?

"All the things you said were true. However, Trip, I am not sharing advanced neuropressure with a male of my species." He got the feeling that he wasn't doing so well at following Vulcan scripts, either.

"I don't exactly see any around here â€" but your world's infested with them."

"And you're concerned that I will be more attracted to them than I am to you." She might not follow human scripts, but T'Pol was a very smart woman.

"Like calls to like." He shrugged, as though it didn't hurt to think about her with one of those superior Vulcan specimens.

"There are are nearly thirty human women aboard Enterprise, Trip. And yet, you are here with me, sharing an act deemed intimate among my people, and unknown among your own. Is that natural?"

"Well, it's different. I'm human â€" we like new things."

"Do you not also have a saying that speaks of the attractive powers of contrasts?"

"You mean 'opposites attract'." He was going to remember her way of putting it, though.

"Yes."

"Where are you going with this?"

"I won't refute your comparisons, because they're irrelevant to me. I have never been attracted to a Vulcan male, Trip. It was assumed I would develop some ability in that regard with Koss. Vulcans aren't evolved to be attracted to a variety of potential mates, as you are. I'm attracted to you - and strongly so." Her eyes dilated, glowing in the candlelight as it danced around the room. Her scent shifted toward minerals, and Trip was suddenly glad for shore leave, and that no one would be looking for either of them for another month, at least.

"Vulcan males don't kiss." She leaned in, and planted one on him. That got him stirred up, and she sidled in closer, neuropressure apparently forgotten. "Nor do they embrace, or caress - "She stretched against him, then arched slowly back, her eyes half-lidded and inviting. When he came to her, her hand darted out, tickling his ribs. She's not finished. Her mouth softens, and she says, "They neither smile nor laugh. Their eyes don't sparkle, and they don't have dimples." Her hands trace down his body, and she makes a soft little moan. "I'm quite certain that none of them have ever 'made love'."

There's nothing else to say for a while that can't be said with bodies and minds. But, as they're lying there, still on the deck, catching their breath, she inhales deeply and says, "They don't smell like you." She snuggles in close, a leg and an arm thrown across him, claiming him with her body. She lays her head in her favorite spot on his chest. "And their hearts could never sing me a lullaby'..."

Trip thought about all they'd been through, and all she still faced. Phlox hadn't found any way to rid her of the need for trellium, or any way to minimize the damage it would do to her, when she ingested it. He wished he'd never sensitized her to the poison, wished she'd never set foot on the \_Seleya\_, even if that meant the others hadn't made it out. Damn, he was going to miss her while she was away!

End  
file.